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# Capitalism, Animal's Eyes, and the Environment

*-An essay about the environmental effects of  
industrial capitalism in Indra Sinha's Animal's  
People*



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## Abstract

This essay explores the correlation between industrial capitalism and environmental damage in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*. The thesis argues that the grave pollution of land, water, and people in the novel stems from capitalistic exploitation of biophysical resources. The novel is analyzed through an ecocritical perspective with eco-Marxism and Social Ecology as the main tools for the analysis. The main findings are that it is capitalistic values, where money and influence are prioritized over the environment, that are depicted as the fundamental reason behind the contamination in Khaufpur. The essay also includes a pedagogical section where *Animal's People* is suggested as a basis for an environmental education agenda in a Swedish EFL classroom. The focus would be how environmental pollution may be related to industrial capitalism and to discuss the student's own thoughts and reflections regarding the issue.

## Key words

Animal's People, Environmentalism, Pollution, Biophysical Resources, Capitalism, Ecocriticism, Eco-Marxism, Social Ecology, EFL Classroom, Content-Based Instruction, Upper-Secondary School.



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## 1 Introduction

*Animal's people* (2008) by Indra Sinha is a novel depicting the story of Animal, an adolescent boy whose life has been marked by “That night” (14). The night in question refers to an industrial catastrophe in the town of Khaufpur in India<sup>1</sup>. Toxic waste from the disaster has left Animal with a twisted spine and forced him to walk on his hands and feet. Therefore, he has been given the name Animal. The narrative of the novel is centered round Animal, who tells the story in the form of a monologue which is being recorded on tape. These tapes are used as a frame story, they are to be given to a Western journalist who is going to write a book based on Animal's story. Early in the novel, Animal states his opinion of the foreign journalists who visit Khaufpur on a regular basis in order to write about the victims of the disaster: “People bend to touch his feet, sir, please sir, your help sir, sir my son, sir my wife, sir my wretched life. Oh how the prick loves this! Sultan among slaves he's, listens with what lofty pity, pretends to give a fuck but the truth is he'll go away and forget them, every last one” (Sinha 9). This excerpt from the text indicates, already at the beginning of the novel, that there are tensions between the local population of Khaufpur and people from more developed parts of the world.

The conflict in the novel between nature's limited capability of absorbing lethal chemical contamination and the capitalistic expansion of production is one of the key themes of Social Ecology and eco-Marxism (Garrard 32). The novel corresponds to the duality between these two factors and Animal can be read as a personification of the outcome when the power of industry outweighs the need for environmental precaution. Further, while eco-Marxism plays a minor and quite insignificant role in the environmental

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<sup>1</sup> Khaufpur is a fictional town filling in for Bhopal, where a real poisonous gas disaster took place in 1984.



justice movement in most developed countries, it is considerably more established in developing countries in the Global South. Eco-Marxism is mainly concerned with social status while Social Ecology focuses on the balance of power and social hierarchy (Garrard 33). The struggle between the American company that ran the factory responsible for the industrial disaster and the people of Khaufpur in *Animal's People* is related to the environmental justice movement in a developing country as well as the hierarchy of power in a society. Therefore, these theoretical perspectives could be used as a basis in an analysis of this novel.

The theme of environmentalism that can be found in the novel has the potential to be implemented in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. For example, the Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school states that: “Environmental perspectives in education should provide students with insights so that they can not only contribute to preventing harmful environmental effects, but also develop a personal approach to overarching, global environmental issues” (Natl. Ag. f. Ed. 6). Furthermore, Esim Gürsoy mentions the importance of environmental education and how it is necessary for students to expand their awareness of the difficulties embedded in the term environment (233). He also sheds light on the beneficial opportunities of implementing environmental education in a foreign language classroom through the method of topic-based learning. In this way, students may have the possibility to enhance their language skills while also improving their understanding of environmental problems (Gürsoy 236). As the importance of environmental awareness recently has been clarified through the Greta Thunberg movement, the wildfires in Australia and California etc, the students’ motivation for the topic is likely to have increased as well. Therefore, there is certainly a need for implementing environmental education in the English as a Foreign Language classroom.

Accordingly, the aim of this essay is to investigate how the company’s unwillingness to take responsibility for the damage their factory



has caused relate to the pollution of Khaufpur in *Animal's People*. This will be done with Social ecology and eco-Marxism as the main theoretical lenses for interpretation. The essay will also include a pedagogical section on the implications of Sinha's novel. Concerning the pedagogical implications, the aim is to increase the students' awareness of the dangers with multinational and capitalistic exploitation in the Global South. The theme of pollution and the consequences it may have for the characters in the novel that are affected correlate to the learning goal stated above from the curriculum (Natl. Ag. f. Ed. 6). Therefore, it might be suitable for environmental education in the foreign language classroom. This thesis argues that industrial capitalism and its exploitation of biophysical resources are depicted as the reasons for the grave environmental situation in Khaufpur in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*. The essay will argue that *Animal's People* can be used in a Swedish EFL classroom to incorporate an agenda of environmental education with a critical focus on industrial capitalism. The novel would then serve as a basis for discussion about the environmental aspects of capitalistic exploitation.

## 2 Ecocriticism and Pedagogical Framework

### 2.1 Main Points of Inquiry

This essay will explore the correlation between industrial capitalism and environmental pollution in *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha. This will be done with Ecocriticism as a theoretical approach, which incorporates a variety of different perspectives and subfields. The ones that will be used for this particular study are postcolonial ecocriticism, eco-Marxism and Social ecology. The theory chapter will also include a section on Indian ecocriticism in order to provide an historical context to the primary text. Apart from this, the study will also include a pedagogical framework on how the primary text



can be incorporated in a Swedish EFL classroom, with environmental education and content-based instruction as a basis.

## 2.2 Ecocriticism and relevant subfields

The theoretical approach that is distinctive for Ecocriticism is intricately connected to political theory and environmentalism, seeking to incorporate concerns related to the environment as well as society into one coherent perspective (Garrard 3-4). The main ambition is to offer an interpretative approach for the purpose of studying literary texts that depict nature and the environment. The field is broad and incorporates several different agendas, for example politics, ethicality, and intellectualism. Despite the variety of themes, the core, or common aim, of Ecocriticism could be defined as a theory with the intention of modifying the human consciousness in its relation to the environment and ecology (Lemmer 224).

The extensive number of possible perspectives for interpretation that are a part of ecocriticism results in the fact that there are no standard approaches or methods that can be applied in general when exploring texts with this theory. This allows for a wide range of entrances to literary studies relating to the environment, society, and the relationship between the human and non-human world (Lemmer 224). However, even though Ecocriticism allows for a multitude of different interpretations, the environmental dilemma that is presented in *Animal's People* is related to a number of specific occurrences related to equally specific factors. Examples of such would be politics and corruption. Therefore will this section be dedicated to branches of ecocriticism that are relevant to this particular study.

One of these branches would be postcolonial ecocriticism, which is relevant to this study because it would highlight the effect of neocolonialism on the environmental situation in *Animal's People*. Since *Animal's People* is settled in the Global South and the plot unravels around the industrial disaster referred to as "That Night" (Sinha 14), it is relevant to include a





segment on misruling and negligence of responsibility from the perspective of postcolonial ecocriticism. As Huggan and Tiffin mention, there are two sides of development in relation to capitalistic expansion in the Global South, which are often intertwined (35-36). The first one is that development serves as a stimulus for the advancement of society and fundamental civil rights. In relation to the second aspect, development is merely an excuse for exploitation and political influence.

Huggan and Tiffin bring up Nigeria and the author Ken Saro-Wiwa as an example of this contradictory situation that can be found in developing countries (35). This particular example has been written about from a postcolonial perspective by Ken Saro-Wiwa and provides a representation of how both social and environmental concerns interfere with one another. While there are impressive amounts of oil in Nigeria, which has enabled the country to invest in its own development, the nation itself is not in control of these resources. Decisions concerning the oil is made by companies oversea, and these decisions have caused serious damage to the local farming and fishing industry (Huggan and Tiffin 35-37). Also, worth mentioning is that some people with official status allegedly act in the best interest of the nation, but secretly redistribute the financial income into unofficial bank accounts. Huggan and Tiffin describe this phenomenon of corruption as “state vampirism” (38), meaning that the people of the nation are bereft of the developmental potential the resources enabled (Huggan and Tiffin 38).

In writing, there has been important additions to the debate in the form of postcolonial literature concerning the social as well as the ecological aspects of the complex situation. In this type of literature, the main motive is to raise the awareness of not only one but all the aspects of postcolonialism and social and environmental issues are of equal concern. Important to note is that activism does not overrule the aesthetic value of the texts. An essential part of postcolonial ecocriticism is to lessen the instrumental form of writing connected to environmentalism, while still advocating the importance of



these issues (Huggan and Tiffin 33). The situation described in Nigeria correlates to the one in *Animal's People* where a foreign company has established itself in a postcolonial country, seemingly contributing to the developmental potential. However, it also results in environmental destruction. Thereof, the postcolonial aspects as well as the societal plays an important role for the understanding of the environmental situation in *Animal's People*, which will be explored further in this essay.

*Animal's People* is set in India in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which would place the plot in the first of the three waves of Indian Ecocriticism's development. Rayson Alex divides Indian Ecocriticism into three different phases which he defines as the Rockbed, Regolith and Subsoil layer (7). The first phase, the Rockbed layer, took place between 1980-2004 and focused on ecocritical literature. The period was influenced by English texts and the poetic tradition of tinai, which describes the aesthetic and artistic aspects of a particular geographical area (Alex 3). The second phase, the Regolith layer, was considerably shorter and is estimated to have lasted between 2004 and 2009. During this time, ecocriticism became more established in India and spread throughout all parts of the country. A greater variety of text from different parts of the world was now included and analysed, as well as the Sanskrit texts. The third phase, the Subsoil layer, has been ongoing since 2009 and is characterized by an increased focus on ecocritical pedagogy, documentaries, and cinema (Alex 7).

Alex also mentions the difference between global ecocriticism and Indian ecocriticism and touches upon what topics would be the most urgent for an Indian ecocritic (6). He characterizes some of the most important fields of investigation and research to be those that are related to a further need of ecological engagement in India. Examples of such research topics could be social hierarchy and politics on local as well as international level (Alex 6). *Animal's People* would fall into this category and because the novel is set in India the national context might therefore be relevant for this



study. Since the primary text for this study is a work of fiction based on a true story it would be in alignment with the later phases of Indian ecocriticism.

Another subfield of ecocriticism that will be used for interpreting the environmental situation in *Animal's People* is eco-Marxism. Eco-Marxism is a strictly political approach to how environmental problems can be interpreted, focusing on the duality between humans and nature and how this affects nature (Garrard 31). The ideology began to develop in the 1980's when critique arose concerning how classical Marxism does not address problems that are related to the environment (Hornborg 82). In the perspective of ecological Marxism, labor is just one of many, as Alf Hornborg puts it: "biophysical resources" (82). This would mean that capitalism is not dependent on physical workforce only but might as well have its basis in any activity where the income outmatches the original cost of the investment (Hornborg 82).

In the context of industrial capitalism there might therefore be other biophysical resources than just labor and could include different kinds of goods, for example energy. This extension is not in conflict with the classical Marxist theory of the exploitation of labor-power but proposes simply that other biophysical parties are affected as well (Hornborg 82). *Animal's People* is in correlation to this in the sense that it is not only the workers at the exploding factory that are affected by the consequences of the disaster. The town's freshwater and the soil are also poisoned ever since "That night" (Sinha 14). Within eco-Marxism there is also a notion that environmental problems that have become a reality as a result of technological advancement also can be resolved with better technology. However, there are other factions that see this as a shallow and insufficient approach to ecological difficulties and instead promotes a more strict control from society over institutions that are dealing with science and technology (Sundararajan 374-75).



In further relation to biophysical resources, there is another term that is relevant for *Animal's People*. This would be “capital accumulation” (Hornborg 80). Embedded in this concept is the idea that local workforce efficiency increases through an expanded import of goods from other countries. This also creates a difference between core countries, who are able to import resources from other regions, and developing countries without the same possibility. Because of this, economic discrepancies between countries are set to increase according to this theory (Hornborg 80). The correlation between this and *Animal's People* would be the company responsible for the disaster in Khaufpur. The country in question is a core country that has the opportunity to import from a developing country in the Global South like India.

Related to the political approach of eco-Marxism is the ecocritical subfield of Social ecology. Social ecology has its origin in social anarchism and focuses on critique of the different classes and levels of society (Owen 34). According to Connor Owen, the ideology presents self-direction as a solution to problems and general concerns such as poverty, corruption etcetera (34). The ecological guidelines are closely related to those of social anarchism, just like it opposes the idea of a hierarchy in society it rejects the idea of nature and humans being on different levels. An important standpoint is that human's dominance over nature reflects the same relationship that exists amongst humans in society. The solution that, according to the concept of social ecology, would put an end to environmental problems is therefore that social structures such as capitalism must vanish before there can be any sustainable relationship with the environment (Owen 34-35). It is worth mentioning that social ecology has received critique for underestimating the complexity of social structures and how difficult it would be to replace or change these (Marland 850). Nonetheless, when interpreting literary texts from the perspective of social ecology, as a part of ecocriticism, it may



contribute to the understanding of environmental problems in relation to society and the political as well as the civil aspects of it.

In order to comment on the narrative structure of *Animal's People* and more specifically how the city of Khaufpur is being perceived from a Western perspective, an article outlining previous research on the novel will also be included. Andrew Mahlstedt discusses the concept of invisibility in *Animal's People* and draws a parallel between the poor impression Westerners visiting Khaufpur receives of the local population and the difference between developed and developing countries (60). According to Mahlstedt, the people of Khaufpur are both unseeable and a marginalized display, open to interpretation (61). In this way, the poverty may be idealized or seen in any other way that aligns with the preconceived notions of the visitor but will not qualify as objective (Mahlstedt 60). This will be used to shed light on possible discrepancies between the perspective of people from the Global South and those of Westerners in the novel.

### 2.3 Pedagogical Framework

The problematic relationship between the environment, the people of Khaufpur, the company and the politicians in the government in *Animal's People* can be interpreted through a number of different theoretical perspectives. However, this theme of the novel can also be implemented in an EFL classroom in order to raise the students' awareness of capitalistic exploitation, especially in countries included in the Global South. Esim Gürsoy mentions the importance of including environmental education in all subjects throughout all years of schooling but spotlights its compatibility with foreign language education (237). This approach can be profitable in that way that the students will have the opportunity to learn a foreign language through a purposeful and engaging practice, while also addressing this important challenge of our time (Gürsoy 237).



Pooley and others describe that the basic aim of environmental education is to bring up questions and issues related to the environment and find solutions to these (711). This should result in the students developing a pro-environmental approach to life in general. In order to provide environmental education with long term effects on the students, there are three different realms or disciplines that are of concern. These are the cognitive, behavioral, and affective disciplines, of which the affective one is the one that would need to be addressed foremost. Since the affective realm is related to the students' notions and beliefs it is necessary to include it in relation to the environment. While cognition, which is related to information and knowledge about the subject, also is necessary to ultimately have an effect on the behavior, the affective aspect needs to be considered first in order to make a lasting impression (Pooley et al 712).

Gürsoy mentions CBL, Content-Based Learning, as a method which makes it possible to mix foreign language learning and environmental education into one comprehensive unit (235). The concept of this pedagogical practice is that a specific content is being taught to the students by giving them the information in the language targeted for acquisition. In this way, the language as well as the topic at hand is taught simultaneously (Gürsoy 235). As Pessoa and others mention, Content-Based Instruction can be beneficial in that way that it allows an integration of academic content into the foreign language classroom while at the same time promoting language learning (103). The importance of the teacher is also emphasized in the study by Pessoa and others, which declares that teachers partaking in CBL must be able to relate different topics with one another in conversation with the students and give the possibility to refine and add to their answers (Pessoa et al 116). This also relates to what Pooley and others mention in relation to the affective aspect of environmental education, where the students' attitudes are in focus (712-713).



Hutton mentions that environmental education in relation to social ecology should focus on the student and strive for the implementation of sustainable values (12-13). There is also justification for environmental education in the curriculum for upper secondary school through the knowledge goal: “Environmental perspectives in education should provide students with insights so that they can not only contribute to preventing harmful environmental effects, but also develop a personal approach to overarching, global environmental issues” (Natl. Ag. f. Ed. 6). In the syllabus for English 7 it is also stated that the students should learn about: Societal issues, cultural, historical, political, and social conditions, and also ethical and existential issues in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.). There is the following knowledge goal from the syllabus that correlates with the pedagogical implications of this essay: Oral and written production and interaction in different situations and for different purposes where students argue from different perspectives, apply, reason, assess, investigate, negotiate and give reasons for their views (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.).

These knowledge goals from the curriculum and the syllabus in relation to the practice of CBI and environmental education will serve as the basis for this essay’s pedagogical implications. The main goal is to use them in constructing a way to implement *Animal’s People* in an EFL classroom in upper secondary school. The literary analysis and the results of it will also be included as a suggestion of a potential theme that could be explored pedagogically.



### 3 Capitalism and Environmentalism in *Animal's People*

As it is mentioned by Garrard, a literary analysis through an ecocritical perspective would aim for incorporating the environmental as well as the societal aspects of the text (3-4). Therefore, it is relevant in this essay to explore the relationships and structures between the people of Khaufpur and the politicians and company responsible for the disaster. Since Ecocriticism is not limited to any certain perspective but is comparable with a multitude of literary themes that are possible to relate to the environment and ecology (Lemmer 224), it is necessary to make a selection in order to narrow the scope of this essay. Therefore, this analysis will focus on how the societal conditions in Khaufpur relates to the environmental situation and furthermore how these corresponds to industrial capitalism.

Before initiating the exploration of the primary text, it might be useful to contextualize it in relation to ecocriticism. While the general guidelines of ecocriticism and the applications of these to this specific work have been mentioned above, Indian ecocriticism is a subfield of the theory relevant for this particular text. It is not mentioned in the primary text in what year it is set, however the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center is acknowledged as an ongoing event in the novel (Sinha 60), which enables the reader to deduce that the plot is set in 2001. There has also been eighteen years since the industrial disaster (Sinha 52), which places the actual disaster of "That night" (Sinha 14) in the 1980's.

According to Alex, this would place the events of the novel in what he defines as the Rockbed layer of Indian Ecocriticism, which lasted between 1980 and 2004. This means it would also be on the verge of the second wave, which roughly began after 2004. This has some significance for how the story is portrayed. As Alex mentions, it was not until the second wave that Indian ecocriticism became established throughout the country. Up until that point, ecocriticism had mostly been concerned with interpretations of older





texts local to India. In fact, it was not until the third wave which began in 2009 that pedagogy and documentaries became incorporated in the ecocritical tradition in India (Alex 7). *Animal's People* has documentary elements to it and was written in 2007, which is close to the time when these types of texts became more incorporated in Indian ecocriticism.

This could also be an explanatory factor to why the journalists that come to interview Animal are all foreign. According to Animal, news reporters seem to come from all over the world to visit Khaufpur, looking for victims of the disaster to write about (Sinha 9). However, he does not mention any journalists representing a local newspaper or at least one from India. Considering the year the novel is written in, the ecocritical movement and the idea of environmental documentaries in cultural media had not yet been well established. The lack of local media coverage could also be seen as a reason why the company has managed to stay out of court for an extensive period of time, which will be discussed further below.

This also relates to the narrative of the novel and how the world Animal lives in is presented to the reader. The topic of narrative structure in *Animal's People* is discussed by Mahlstedt who concludes that there exists a form of anonymity regarding Animal and the other people of Khaufpur (60). They are ultimately marginalized as poor and as victims, a combination of attributes which makes it impossible for the rest of the world to gain an objective impression of them (Mahlstedt 60). There is an example of this in the novel when Animal and the American medical doctor Elli discuss the people of Khaufpur and Elli comments:

This is the strangest thing of all about Khaufpur, that people put up with so much. Take a look. It's not just blacked out streets and killer traffic, people in this city tolerate open sewers, garbage everywhere, poisoned wells, poisoned babies, doctors who don't do their jobs, corrupt politicians, thousands of sick that no one seems to care about" (Sinha 151).



Mahlstedt sees a correlation between the lack of understanding that foreigners show the people of Khaufpur and the split between the Global South and the developed countries in West. The local population of Khaufpur is from a Western perspective perceived as a symbol of poverty, which in itself may be multifaceted in terms of idealized or romantic poverty, but ultimately a non-objective interpretation of reality (Mahlstedt 60). In this way, the dynamic between developed and developing countries is present in the narrative of the novel and it can be interpreted as a reason why *Animal* addresses the reader as “Eyes” (Sinha 13-14).

The town of Khaufpur carries a resemblance to the situation in Nigeria described by Huggan and Tiffin from the perspective of postcolonialism. The city is located in the Global South and has been heavily affected by an industrial catastrophe that took place more than eighteen years ago. The people living there are, however, still falling ill from toxic waste that is contaminating the soil and water supply. This corresponds with the phenomenon Huggan and Tiffin define as “state vampirism”, meaning that a developed country exploits a developing one at the cost of this nation’s potential to conduct further developmental advancement. The company responsible for the catastrophe has never appeared in court, but the spokesman for the people of Khaufpur, Zafar, has devoted his life to bring justice for the victims of the disaster. In court he declares this statement:

thousands have died since that night, for them was no justice. The factory is abandoned full of chemicals which as we speak are poisoning thousands more...I think in no other country would the law be allowed to be such a farce, if the will existed to resolve this matter, it could have been done long ago.” (Sinha 52-53).

This clearly indicates that the institution of law willingly has failed to hold the company responsible and that there is a division between India and other countries.



Zafar's comment about the law having been reduced to a farce and that this only could happen in India correlates to the idea of development being an excuse for exploitation and political influence that is mentioned by Huggan and Tiffin. This would be the case when companies establish themselves in the Global South officially declaring that the production will enable an enhanced level of development and increased civil rights (35-6). The situation in *Animal's People* is related to this by the fact that the company responsible is an American company. Since the disaster it has also for the last eighteen years consciously failed to show up in court nor making any other attempt in stabilizing the fragile circumstances the citizens of Khaufpur are left to deal with (Sinha 52-3). Based on this, it is plausible to conclude that the company is not interested in nor prioritizing human and civil rights.

There is further evidence in the novel that the company and the government are corrupt, for example the following statement from *Animal*:

Government types are lying. Zahreel Khan the minister himself came here to the Nutcracker and in front of a crowd of jarnaliss took a glass of well water and drank it to show it was safe<sup>2</sup>. But Chhoté Ram, son of Mukund the tailor saw him a minute later go behind a house and stick two fingers down his throat. (Sinha 110).

This corruptive aspect of the life in Khaufpur is similar to the description offered by social ecology, where class differences are considered to be an essential part of the problem concerning environmental destruction (Owen 35). In *Animal's People* the situation is relatively clear, the officials are well aware that the water is poisonous but are unwilling to admit it. It is later explained that the politicians and the company have been in collusion since it was first established in Khaufpur: "...so naive you're", says a second. 'Haven't the politicians been in the Kampani's pocket from the beginning?

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<sup>2</sup> Jarnaliss is an Indian-English vernacular expression for journalists.



Have you forgotten the old days, how those pompous big shots would ride in Kampani limos, never looking to right or left?" (Sinha 112). In light of this, it is evident that the environmental damage as well as the health issues in Khaufpur are not priorities to the government as much as their relations with the company abroad. This is not only an indication of corruption but also a reference to how the environment and the poor are being valued and deprioritized.

According to Hornborg, the term resources can be interpreted in a wider sense than simply referring to labor power (82). There is a correlation between this and the uneven relationship that might exist between rich and developing countries which Hornborg mentions. Through a lens of eco-Marxism, the ultimate driving force behind industrial capitalism is the amount of money that can be made from an investment. That could potentially mean a local workforce but might as well refer to other biophysical resources such as land or water. If the resources in question are for sale or if the workers seemingly would benefit from their new occupation, there would seem to be a reciprocal exchange between both employers and employees. However, as Hornborg points out, this is also what enables an uneven exchange of money between the two parts, because it would seem like a mutually beneficial situation (82). In developing countries, which lack the possibility to import and see to the needs of their own labor and resources to the same extent as developed countries, this would ultimately lead to an uneven development (Hornborg 80). In *Animal's People*, this seems to be the case based on how the politicians in Khaufpur are unwilling to admit the seriousness of the situation, while the American company has not appeared in court for eighteen years.

In further relation to eco-Marxism, there is the issue of technology which Sundararajan mentions (374-75). Some branches of eco-Marxism promote the idea that as mankind continues to find ways of using nature as a resource, technological advancements will always be able to provide a



sufficient solution. When this standpoint is put into relation with capitalism and environmental damage it results in the question whether or not necessarily technological precautions have been taken to prevent production from having a harmful effect on nature (Sundararajan 375). The fact that the disaster in *Animal's People* happened in the first place, as well as the fact that nothing has been done to cleanse the water and soil, indicates that there was an inadequacy between the production of the company and its environmental safety.

An essential part of the novel is the struggle of a small group of idealist characters who are determined to make the company answer for their environmental crimes. Zafar, the leader of the group, works tirelessly and in complete accordance with the law to bring the company to court and give the people of Khaufpur a rightful compensation. As he himself says about the seemingly hopeless court proceedings: "Who can tell... One day something must surely happen, why not today?" (Sinha 50). This attitude indicates the belief that persistent endeavor ultimately will result in a scenario that makes it all worthwhile. However, even though the law technically is on the side of the people of Khaufpur, nothing happens for more than eighteen years. In this way, the correlation between social structures and the environment that is an integral part of social ecology is confirmed. As has been mentioned above, there exists a certain way of life in Khaufpur which involves corruptive relationships between representatives of both industry and government. These structures are causing immense difficulty when Zafar and his group of idealists are trying to change the situation through court.

This goes in unison with the social ecologist idea mentioned by Owen, that oppression of nature would occur as a reflection of how humans treat one another (35). In *Animal's People*, the environment directly comes to suffer as a consequence of the negligence the representatives of the company and the government show the people of Khaufpur. This, in combination with the corruptive aspects and the industrial exploitation of the Global South



mentioned previously, implies that the situation in Khaufpur is multifaceted but originally stems from capitalism. Money is a central theme, concerning the entire process involving the court case and the lack of environmental and health precautions taken after the disaster. The people of Khaufpur are well aware of this, and there are examples of this in the text. Even when an actual health clinic is opened up by the American medical doctor Elli, which offers treatment to the victims of the disaster without charging them anything, Zafar and his community refuse to go there. In fact, they even encourage everyone to boycott the clinic, believing it to be an evasion by the company with the purpose of collecting false data concerning the health situation in Khaufpur (Sinha 124-5).

This corresponds to capitalism in such way that the people of Khaufpur simply find it far too unlikely that the government and the politicians would help to establish a much-needed facility free of charge. Suspicions arise immediately and the clinic is destined to fail before it has even been officially declared open. In this way, the structures of power indeed seem to have a profound effect on the situation, which is in accordance with what Owen describes about hierarchies between humans and how these will reflect on to nature (35). Zafar and his group of people are working towards dissolving these structures, which as Marland points out (850), proves to be difficult. As the situation does not improve, Zafar ultimately goes on a hunger strike in order to force the company to act (Sinha 286). This further shows how difficult it is to improve a situation involving environmental damage by trying to change the structures that caused the damage in the first place.

To conclude this analysis, there is a correlation between industrial capitalism and environmental pollution in *Animal's People*. There are several aspects that have an effect, postcolonialism, biophysical resources and structures of power are examples of such. The difference between social classes in Khaufpur becomes clear because of the dynamic between Zafar



and his group and the court and the government officials. The extreme measures, like the hunger strike, that turn out to be necessary in order to make the ruling classes listen to the representatives of the people would be an example of this. The fact that the company is positioned on another continent makes the situation even more complicated since this obstructs the court procedures.

## 4 Pedagogical Implications

As the thesis for this essay argues, the novel could be used to introduce the correlation of industrial capitalism and environmental pollution and because of the complex nature of this topic I have chosen English 7 as the targeted course for this project. Hopefully, there is a possibility that the students taking that course have reached a point of maturity that enables them to handle the subject in a more objective and reflecting way than can be expected from younger students. There are multiple themes that could be extracted from *Animal's People*, but in regard of environmental education the relationship between capitalistic exploitation and its effect on nature and also the people populating the polluted area is the most relevant topic which permeates the novel. A benefit of this, which Gürsoy mentions, is that language and subject can work as mutual stimulants to each other. The engaging nature of the topic provides the students with the opportunity to learn a foreign language while also partaking in the meaningful exercise of discussing the global challenge which is environmental damage (Gürsoy 237). Therefore, implementing an environmental theme in a Swedish EFL classroom may prove to be beneficial for the language acquisition as well as the students' motivation in regard to the topic.

Environmental education in itself is a complicated term which could potentially cause confusion among teachers since it is not specific to any certain subject but is to be generally applied as a theme in combination with



other areas of learning. Pooley and O'Connor, however, present a clear picture of the purpose and the most essential aspects of this branch of teaching. The aim of any form environmental education would be to afford the students with a fundamental understanding of the problems and complications that have become a part of nature as a whole and how these can be resolved. This would be done by focusing on an environmental issue, evaluate it and in cooperation with the students try to find solutions to the problems that have been found. The ultimate goal is that the practice will result in the students having a willingness and determination to recognize environmental issues and change these for the better (Pooley and O'Connor 711). From this perspective, *Animal's People* would qualify as a way to combine foreign language teaching with environmental education. Through this novel, a clear environmental theme can be extracted and brought into the classroom for the students to analyze. The dire situation the people of Khaufpur find themselves in and the fact that the plot takes place many years after the disaster might also be helpful in the processing of identifying not only the problems at hand but also what caused them and how they could have been prevented.

The actual method, how this novel can be taught, is not an uncomplicated matter. As is mentioned above, the topic of environmentalism is an important and challenging one which could work as a motivation but might as well also give the students the impression that the situation is hopeless. Industrial capitalism in itself and the way *Animal's People* portrays it may undoubtedly come across as an issue too large for any single individual to change or affect. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration that implementing this topic in a classroom might have the opposite effect of what is desired.

Gürsoy mentions CBI, or content-based instruction as a method that can be used to integrate this difficult topic in a classroom. The general concept of this pedagogical practice is that language teaching and a certain





topic are combined to provide the students with both aspects (Gürsoy 235). In this practice, language is not what is being taught primarily but is instead functioning as a way of communicating information about the topic in question, as well as discussing it with the class (Pessoa and others 103). In order to integrate a discussion about the complications of industrial capitalism in relation to environmental pollution in an EFL classroom, this pedagogical practice could therefore serve as a method to do so. After the students have read the novel, a discussion could be focused on the dynamic between capitalism and the consequences it might have on nature. This would provide an opportunity for the topic to be elaborated and researched by the students individually as well as with assistance from the teacher. Without explicitly focusing on language acquisition, the students would still have the chance to enhance their language competence while also learning about the topic in question.

Since the specific situation in *Animal's People* is related to societal issues, it is also relevant to mention environmental education in relation to social ecology. Hutton mentions that environmental education from this perspective also should be centered around the student. Important aspects of the teacher's responsibilities would be to help the students to see and draw parallels between different interests and groups of people and how these relate to the environmental situation they are currently delving into. It would also be of importance to explore what values and beliefs may be highlighted in relation to these interests and groups (Hutton 13). According to Hutton, it is furthermore of importance to let the students form their own opinions regarding the topic and then consider what would have to change in order for the situation to align with their idea (13). For *Animal's People*, this could be a useful contribution to the practice of CBI, also promoted in regard of environmental education by Gürsoy (235). Except from learning about industrial capitalism's potentially harmful effect on the environment while also developing their foreign language skills, the students would additionally



have to challenge their own thinking in relation to societal structures and nature. Furthermore, this aligns with what Pooley and O'Connor defines as the affective realm's necessity for behavioral change (713). This would be the part of environmental education that is concerned with the students' beliefs and notions, which is an integral part of long-term behavioral change (Pooley and O'Connor 713). To add this to the teaching of *Animal's People* might therefore help to achieve the goal of providing the students with a pro-environmental consciousness. Also, the affective realm could justify the choice of including literature in the EFL classroom as a way to address the students' feelings and thoughts in a more thorough way than general discussions and presentations on the topic would enable.

As previously has been mentioned, *Animal's People* corresponds to several knowledge goals from the Swedish curriculum and Syllabus for the English subject. From the curriculum there is the knowledge goal concerning environmental education: "Environmental perspectives in education should provide students with insights so that they can not only contribute to preventing harmful environmental effects, but also develop a personal approach to overarching, global environmental issues" (Natl. Ag. f. Ed. 6). From the syllabus, the primary text is also applicable to: "ethical and existential issues in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used" and "Societal issues, cultural, historical, political and social conditions, and also ethical and existential issues in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used" (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.). This combination of environmental education and societal and ethical issues would be the basis for an integration of *Animal's People* in a Swedish EFL classroom.

## 5 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the correlation between industrial capitalism and environmental damage in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*. The aim of the



essay was to investigate the interrelationship between the company's lack of responsible behavior and the environmental damage in Khaufpur and how this relates to industrial capitalism. The thesis argues that it is capitalistic exploitation of biophysical resources that are responsible for the environmental pollution of Khaufpur. In the essay, support has been found for this claim by analyzing the novel from an Ecocritical perspective. By incorporating Social Ecology and eco-Marxism and applying them to *Animal's People*, it becomes clear that Sinha has depicted the city of Khaufpur as a town not regulated by law but by corruption and social structures. These structures are not in favor of the people portrayed as the lower classes, that were and still are direct victims of the disaster but gain only the top layers of society. The government has been in a collusion with the company since the disaster took place over eighteen years ago, which has resulted in the people of Khaufpur placing their trust in an idealist group led by Zafar instead of the officials. Ultimately, this leads back to the fact that the company nor the government never have prioritized the environment, or the local population close to the factory.

The fact that Khaufpur is located in India and a part of the Global South is also of significance. The American company has taken advantage of the corrupt government and it is commented on in the novel that no other country would allow such mishandling of the law. Throughout the novel it becomes clear that the company has bereft Khaufpur of its developmental potential and stopped justice from having its process. The government has also let this happen which clearly indicates that there is a division of power between developed countries in West and developing ones in the Global South. The conclusions of the analysis points towards Sinha depicting capitalism, and ultimately money, as the center of the environmental difficulties that make Khaufpur and its citizens suffer. The combination of corruption and time has led to a complete mistrust of officials. The people of Khaufpur are convinced that they would not do anything unless it would first



and foremost would benefit them in some way, which can be observed in the boycott of the Elli's clinic. This all stems back to the polluted soil and water, which have remained in that state because of a prioritization of money and the company's wellbeing instead of the environment and its effect on people.

Concerning the pedagogical aspects of the essay, the suggestion that has been put forward is to use *Animal's People* in a Swedish EFL classroom as a basis for an environmental education agenda. The specific topic would be the correlations between environmental destruction and capitalistic values and exploitation. It is suggested that the pedagogical practice of content-based instruction may be used, as well as a student-centered approach that is encouraged when environmental education is practiced in relation to social ecology. The long term would be to provide the students with a pro-environmental attitude as well as giving them the opportunity to practice a foreign language simultaneously.

If this study were to be taken further, a suggestion for research could be to investigate how environmental damage has been depicted in other postcolonial novels. In *Animal's People* it is clearly stated that the company is American, but it would be interesting to see if the same situation is present in other types of English literature and whether or not the trend is increasing or decreasing. For *Animal's People*, I think the characters could be investigated further potentially by analyzing the trauma and difficulty Animal has to go through because of this twisted spine. Other characters in the novel have also undergone physical implications as a direct consequence of the poison from the factory. Therefore, the link between physical and mental trauma and environmental damage in the novel could be explored further. This might also offer an understanding for the accepting attitude the citizens of Khaufpur seem to have towards their situation. Studies such as the ones that have been suggested could help to establish a better understanding for the environmental effects of capitalism in literature.







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